

Guildford borough Local Plan: strategy and sites

2015 – 2034

Adopted 25 April 2019

Policy D2 was updated on
22 March 2023.



Policy H3: Rural exception homes

Introduction

- 4.2.48 In many rural Green Belt areas of the borough high house prices and a limited supply of new affordable homes restrict the potential for residents and newly-forming households and those working in the parish to live in a home of their own that they can afford. People who cannot afford to access market housing that meets their needs, either to rent or to buy, need affordable homes. People in this situation who have connections to rural parishes through family, recent past residence, or current employment may be eligible for rural exception housing.
- 4.2.49 As an exception to other development plan policies including Green Belt policy, we will support the provision of rural exception housing. This is affordable housing provided on small sites in rural areas on Green Belt land, as an exception to other planning policies. Such housing must be retained permanently for people who are current or former residents, or who have a family or employment connection to the parish.

POLICY H3: Rural exception homes

- (1) Small scale affordable housing developments in the Green Belt, which can include pitches for Gypsies and Travellers not meeting the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites definition of a gypsy or traveller¹⁶, will be permitted to meet identified local affordable housing needs provided that:
 - a) the site adjoins or is closely related to, and in safe and reasonable walking distance of a rural settlement, and
 - b) the number, size and tenure of homes would be appropriate to meet, or to contribute to meeting, the identified affordable housing needs of the local community, and
 - c) the affordable homes are all secured in perpetuity.
- (2) The minimum number of market homes to make a rural exception scheme viable will be permitted where:
 - (a) a developer demonstrates that the scheme would be unviable without the inclusion of market housing, and
 - (b) it does not inflate the threshold land value¹⁷, and
 - (c) it is suitably integrated into the rural exception development.

¹⁶ The planning policy definition of gypsies and travellers is set out in Planning Policy for Traveller Sites 2015: Annex 1 Glossary.

¹⁷ This is the minimum land value likely to trigger an owner to sell the land.

Reasoned justification

- 4.2.50 There are fewer opportunities to build new homes in our small rural settlements surrounded by, or designated as Green Belt than there are in and around the towns of Guildford, and Ash and Tongham due to more restrictive policies on housing in countryside and particularly in the Green Belt. Reflecting this reduced opportunity, legislation enables us to secure affordable housing in perpetuity in and around most of the villages in the borough. In the parishes listed in the legislation we can secure rural exception housing in perpetuity, secured by planning obligation. In the parishes of East Horsley and Send, rural exception housing may be delivered providing the protection is in place to secure these permanently as affordable housing¹⁸.
- 4.2.51 In determining whether a site is suitably small scale, consideration will be given to identified local affordable housing needs and to previous applications for rural exception housing.
- 4.2.52 We will work with parish councils, the Surrey Rural Housing Enabler and landowners to understand the affordable housing needs of people with a local connection to specific rural areas. In applying this policy, consideration will be given to the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are current or recent former residents of the Parish or have a current employment or family connection to it. We will facilitate provision of rural exception sites for local agricultural workers, and for local settled travellers who don't meet the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites definition of gypsy or traveller where an accommodation need is demonstrated in line with Policy H3 (1). Traveller rural exception accommodation will be provided on Council-owned public pitches on small, suitably located sites in the Green Belt.
- 4.2.53 Local Rural Housing Needs Surveys are generally carried out by the Surrey Rural Housing Enabler, working with the Council and Parish Councils. We have a rolling programme of surveys for the borough's Parishes. Over half of the parishes in the borough already have local housing needs surveys, although such surveys must be up-to-date if they are to be used in support of a planning application for rural exception housing. Developers may also carry out their own surveys, provided these are verified by the Council and the Rural Housing Enabler.
- 4.2.54 Rural exception housing will be delivered by Registered Providers, and by private developers.
- 4.2.55 Land values are generally high across the borough. To ensure that developers take into account the policy requirements of land potentially suitable for rural exception housing, where a developer proposes that at least one market house needs to be included to make the rural exception scheme viable, we will require submission of a development appraisal. In considering this, we will limit the threshold land value of the site to no more than ten times the agricultural land value at the time. Where agreement cannot be reached, external consultants will be appointed at the developer's cost to provide an independent assessment of the scheme's viability.

¹⁸ This is because they are not designated as "rural areas" by the Housing (Right to Acquire or Enfranchise) (Designated Rural Areas in the South East) Order 1997 (Statutory Instrument 1997 No. 625), or as Designated Protected Areas by the Housing (Right to Enfranchise) (Designated Protected Areas) (England) Order 2009 (Statutory Instrument 2009 No. 2098). East Horsley and Send therefore are not exempt from the right to acquire or right to enfranchise, and so affordable housing cannot automatically be secured in perpetuity through the legislation. In order for a rural exception scheme to be granted planning approval in East Horsley or Send, the housing provider will have to demonstrate that mechanisms are in place to ensure that the properties remain as affordable housing in perpetuity, for example being held in a Community Land Trust and let on terms which would not allow the freehold to be acquired by the resident and/or sold on the open market.